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managing public lands for multiple use

Issue 20 November 1989

First hunt – OK Dad, tote that moose!

u.s. department of the interior • bureau of land management

Oh, give me a home where the caribou roam

Volunteers continue 35-year range study

Cladonia stellaris, Cladonia rangiferina and *Cladonia arbuscula.*

If that sounds like Latin, you're right. Student Conservation Association volunteers Al Wetzel and Jennifer Jones spoke the "dead language" every day while on the job this summer for BLM and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

They recorded minute changes in the number and kinds of plants they observed in study plots scattered throughout a huge area south of the Denali Highway in southcentral Alaska.

These plots were established in 1955 by the state of Alaska to evaluate changes in the Nelchina caribou herd's range. "This range study is part of the total package," says Jim Lieb, an assistant area biologist for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF & G) in Glennallen. "We look at herd numbers and evaluate animal mortality, productivity and their physical condition, all on a regular basis."

Wetzel and Jones read four one-meter-square plots at each of 38 locations, checking the amount of moss, grass, sedge, shrub, forb and lichen in each. They also repaired any broken fences and built three new exclosures.

Many of the study plots are in remote areas between the Denali and Glenn Highways.

No, it's not a concentration camp. These three Student Conservation Association volunteers are gathering data from a "caribou range exclosure." Protected vegetation inside a fenced area is compared with vegetation where the caribou have grazed.

"One thing that surprised me is that there are no English common names for most of these lichens," said Wetzel, "but one of the hardest parts was just finding the exclosures. They were marked on maps and described in a text and also marked with orange spray paint. But sometimes the fences had fallen down or the paint got worn away."

In the mid-1960's the Nelchina herd numbered 64,000 animals. But by 1972 it crashed to 7,000 animals for reasons unrelated to range condition, such as predation, hunting and migration to other herds.

"We were lucky to have the exclosures established before the big population crash," said Lieb. "We saw how the vegetation reflected the herd size, and then we could see how the range recovered as the herd declined. Now the herd is building up again, even though the range hasn't fully recovered."

Since BLM is responsible for managing habitat and ADF & G manages the animals that use it, they agreed to split the costs. To further reduce costs, both agencies utilized the Student Conservation Association, a private organization that recruits qualified students looking for meaningful work experience to help their careers.

Al Wetzel, a senior in biology from Kuntztown, Pa., and Jennifer Jones, a wildlife biology major from Alpine, Texas, were both eager to come to Alaska.

Both Wetzel and Jones are very enthusiastic about their work. In fact, they are enthusiastic about just being in Alaska. Wetzel even turned down a paid position in Yellowstone park to come and work basically for free, explaining, "I've dreamed about coming to Alaska for 30 years. I wanted to see what pristine country is like."

Jones wants to pursue a career working with big game mammals, possibly in Alaska. "I'm thinking about coming back up here this winter for a visit to see what it is like in the cold," she says.

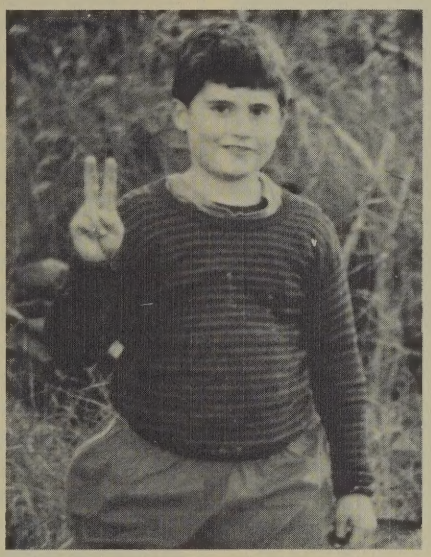
We'll show her!

—EB

First hunt: so close, yet so far

As he looked through the sight of his dad's M77 Ruger 30-06, Johnny's small hand trembled. The animal standing 50 meters before him was a monster. His Dad urged him on. He closed his eyes and squeezed the trigger. The single shot hit the bull moose square in the chest, making the animal stagger.

John Rego knew when he took his two sons moose hunting, it would be a different type of trip. Johnny was then 9 and brother Michael was only 6 years old. The elder Rego says he knew his son Johnny's marksmanship would cause him "a terrible amount of work for the next 10 hours." And it sure did.



By his second hunt, when this photo was taken, Johnny Rego was more savvy. He got his moose on dry ground.

They had left their home in Glennallen the night before to fly into an unnamed lake off the Middle Fork of the Gulkana River in an area managed by the Bureau of Land Management.

Now, on the lake where they had set up camp, fall was in the air and the brilliant autumn colors were showcased by the magnificent Alphabet Hills in the distance.

As the boys ran up a small hill by their lakeside campsite, Rego assessed the area, checked their equipment, and most of all, anticipated the hunt before them.

The excitement proved too much for the youngest boy, Michael. He couldn't seem to stay out of the mud or the campfire. An early bedtime seemed appropriate.

Rego was ready. The boisterous former Special Forces Army Captain, now a geologist with the Bureau, is a self-described "man of the wild."

When he awoke the next day, however, he was surprised to find a big moose camped outside their tent. He quickly roused Johnny, and the fireworks began.

Johnny dressed with great stealth. When he stepped out of the tent, the moose was still close, standing down the hill at the the edge of the lake.

Rego hoped Johnny would remember all he had taught him. (Rego had taught him to shoot at an early age.) When Johnny got up his nerve and fired the shot, the moose walked into the lake and died. Johnny had learned his lessons well.

"The water came to my chest when I reached the animal," Rego said. "The 60-inch antlers were dragging in the lake's mud, so I removed the head. Then the carcass was more manageable and floated a bit higher, so I pushed it closer to shore. By now the water is to my waist and I'm getting cold."

Next came a front quarter. "Every time I removed a piece, the carcass floated higher, so I could drag it closer to shore."

The hind quarters weighed about 200 pounds. Little by little,Rego hauled the meat to shore. "Every time I got a piece on shore, I bagged it and hung it in a tree.

"The kids couldn't help carry the meat. They were just too small," said Rego. He finally finished cutting, skinning and bagging the meat just in time for dinner.

"I was completely wiped out," Rego said. It was early to bed again, but this time their sleep was interrupted by the antics of a grizzly bear intent on getting the meat out of the tree.

The area where this hunt occurred, around the Middle Fork of the Gulkana River, is virtually untouched wilderness, according to BLM biologist Frank Bird, and is only accessible by off-road vehicle or by flying in to certain lakes. BLM's management here stresses allowing reasonable access while maintaining the current habitat.

Shooting the bear was out of the question, Rego thought. "I just didn't want to deal with the dude." After two tries, he managed to drive the grizzly off.

Regard'ess of the hard work that hunt involved, Rego evidently thought the experience was worth it. He took his boys moose hunting again the following year. This time though, they weren't as lucky.

After seeing numerous cows, which the boys were told they couldn't shoot, Rego's youngest, Michael, looked to his father and asked, "Do cow moose have meat?"

There's so much to educating young hunters.

—DA

BLM pushes for resource data in utility corridor

Cartographer Linda Frazer pauses during a hike in the mountains of the Brooks Range.

It was an inventory project like no other BLM has done in Alaska. During the 40 days this summer when BLM operated a field camp at Coldfoot in the utility corridor along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, workers came from all over BLM's statewide organization to collect baseline data on natural resources.

Why the big push? One reason is public interest in seeing the corridor. Over the past three years, the number of visitors to this area has increased from a few hundred a year to an estimated 4,000 in 1989. A second reason is that BLM's management plan identified a need for inventory in the 2.7 million acres of public land along the Dalton Highway from Livengood to just south of Prudhoe Bay.

This season's information, plus more to be collected over the next several years, will complete the inventory.

"The area is nationally important because North Slope oil is transported through the pipeline through the corridor lands to the Lower 48 States," said BLM Arctic District Manager Tom Dean. "People from all over the world are coming to hike and float rivers in this remote area because its primitive beauty can be reached from the Dalton Highway, and a lot of wildlife can be seen. BLM, as manager of these public lands, must make sure that the oil gets through and that the other natural resources are conserved for future generations. This data will help us conserve the resources so the corridor can maintain its primitive qualities while people continue to use the land."

—SDW

Study results

By the time the project ended and the camp at Coldfoot closed August 16, the researchers:

- discovered 14 prehistoric archaeological sites and 18 historic ones
- inventoried 232 miles of fish habitat along 18 different streams
- took water samples from streams in four watersheds
- located a pair of peregrine falcons, a family of golden eagles and 3 new sheep lick sites
- identified 60 potential recreation sites—places for possible development of campgrounds, picnic sites, waysides and trails
- examined 75 sites on 40 streams for recreational mineral collecting
- mapped 3,000 acres of commercial timber

Volunteer tries it all

BLM volunteer Karen Aho worked on the corridor project from early June until the camp closed August 16. Besides helping at the Interagency Visitor Information Center, she worked with many specialists collecting data.

She traveled with a fisheries crew measuring river widths, stream bed composition, types and numbers of fish.

With the minerals crew, she shoveled dirt and panned gold to determine the likelihood a casual user would find gold.

On a crew researching water-based recreation opportunities, she paddled down the Koyukuk River recording sites for put-in, take-out and overnight camping.

With a crew researching land-based recreation opportunities, she flew to mountain tops, picked the best way down and helped mark trail routes for hikers. She also drove the Dalton Highway on other days researching suitable places to develop campgrounds.

Aho summed up her experience, saying, "It might be said of the volunteer experience that a wonderful time was had by all."

—SDW

Volunteers Karen Aho and Otto Paneac fill the sluice box for another try at finding a few flakes of gold.

They touched a bit of Alaska

Tundra tantalizes 20,000 Boy Scouts

BLM's exhibit was a big hit with more than 20,000 Boy Scouts at their National Boy Scout Jamboree in Virginia this August. BLM was one of 26 government and private agencies that participated.

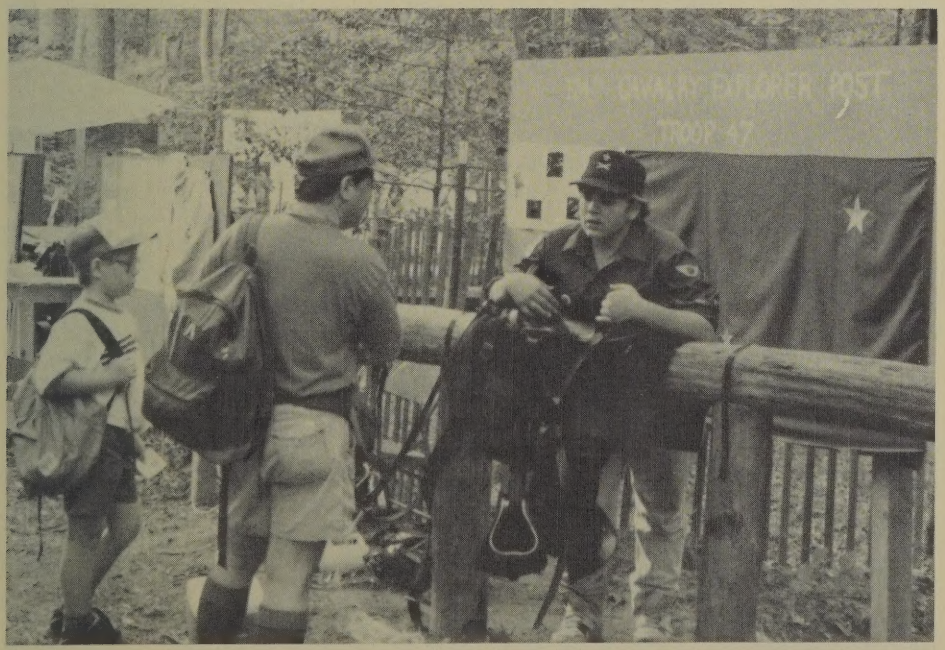
To represent Alaska BLM, the Steese/White Mountains District created a hands-on display illustrating activities that occur on the tundra. Scouts were encouraged to touch live tundra moss and lichens, fur and skulls from arctic animals, water from glacial streams, and different minerals found in Alaska. Other BLM offices sent displays for deserts and forests.

Landscape architect Dick Bouts accompanied two Cavalry Explorer Scouts, Shawn Swanson and George Williams, whom BLM sponsored to attend the jamboree to explain the delicate balance BLM uses to manage multiple use in tundra areas.

The two scouts also helped build a corral and care for a horse, Sugar, and a burro, Jack, both adopted from BLM's Adopt-a-Horse program. This program finds homes for wild horses and burros.

Swanson and Williams worked at least four hours a day at the BLM exhibit during the Jamboree. BLM's Steese/White Mountains District co-sponsors their troop, the 124th Cavalry Explorer Post 47.

Dick Bouts, BLM landscape architect, explains the Alaska tundra exhibit to a scout leader from Virgina.



Explorer scout George Williams of the 124th Cavalry Post, Troop 47, shows a cavalry saddle to visiting scouts and tells them about the Fairbanks-based cavalry unit.

This trip was the first time Williams had ever been outside Alaska.

While they were at the jamboree, Williams and Swanson had a chance to meet Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan, Jr., and BLM Director Cy Jamison. After the Jamboree, the explorer scouts spent four days touring Washington, D.C.

Commented Steese/White Mountains District Manager Don Runberg, "We welcomed the chance to participate. Today's scouts will be the leaders of tomorrow, and they need a good understanding of the nation's natural resources and all the benefits Americans get from those resources."

—SDW

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Penfold chosen BLM Assistant Director

Michael J. Penfold

BLM's Alaska State Director, Michael J. Penfold, has been named Assistant Director for Lands and Renewable Resources in the agency's national office. Penfold is the senior federal land management official in Alaska.

Since 1984 he has been responsible for the management of more than 90 million acres in Alaska. As state director, Penfold has accomplished a major reorganization that improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and has instituted a patent planning process that substantially enhanced the transfer of land to Alaska Natives and the state government. He has been awarded two significant honors: the Department of the Interior Distinguished Service Award and the Presidential Rank of Meritorious Executive.

In his new post he will be responsible for renewable resource management policy on all BLM lands, more than 270 million acres nationwide. He will be a key member of the BLM's national leadership.

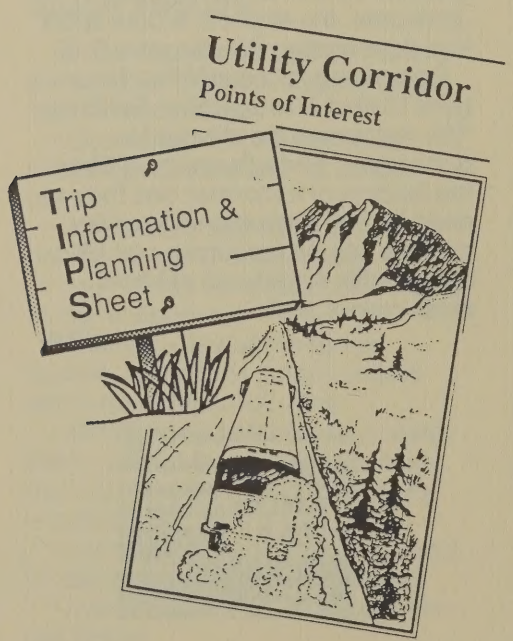
Penfold began his career in 1960 with the U.S. Forest Service. He joined BLM as Montana State Director in 1979. In 1984 he was transferred to Alaska.

"I am going to Washington with mixed emotions," Penfold said. "While I am looking forward to the challenge, I will greatly miss Alaska and its people."

Lester Rosenkrance is Acting State Director pending the announcement of a new state director.

—DV

BLM prints TIPS sheets, new brochure



A new series of one-page flyers, called **Trip Information and Planning Sheets or TIPS**, has just been printed. This series provides detailed information on established trails in the White Mountains National Recreation Area. One TIPS charts the mileage between cabins and trail junctions; the others show map locations and elevations of the terrain crossed by each trail, give descriptions of each trail and its surroundings, list guidelines for off-road vehicle use, and rate the difficulty of each trail.

Other TIPS are currently available for Summit, Ski Loop, Wickersham Creek, Windy Creek, Colorado Creek, Trail Creek, O'Brien Creek, and Upper and Lower Fossil Creek trails.

For recorded trail information in the winter, call (907) 474-2372. To obtain TIPS for the White Mountains National Recreation Area, contact the BLM Land Informaton Office (phone 474-2251) or the Steese/White Mountains District Office (phone 474-2350) 1150 University Ave., Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844.

The new **Utility Corridor Points of Interest** brochure gives information to make trips up the Dalton Highway more enjoyable. The Dalton Highway runs along the route of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline from the town of Livengood to Prudhoe Bay. The BLM manages the Utility Corridor, which surrounds the pipeline and the highway.

Mixing information about scenic points of interest like Sukakpak Mountain and Finger Rock with mining history around the Coldfoot area, this easy-to-read road guide helps travelers prepare for the challenging and unusual trip. The brochures are available at Alaska Public Lands Information Centers, BLM land information offices, or BLM's Arctic District Office, 1150 University Ave., Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844; telephone (907) 474-2301.

—SDW

BLM puts up 2 more recreation cabins

Now ready for skiers in White Mountains area

Two new public recreation cabins and a kiosk housing an interpretive display were built by BLM in the White Mountains National Recreation Area this summer.

The addition of the two cabins brings the total number in the recreation area up to six.

The new 12-by-16-foot **O'Brien Creek log cabin** is the same design as the previously built Moose Creek, Windy Gap and Colorado Creek cabins. Four, or possibly six, people can stay comfortably in the cabin. It has a built-in table, bunks with mattresses, a loft, stoves for cooking and heating, and a gas lantern.

The new **Wolf Run Trail Shelter** is a cross between BLM's standard cabin and a traditional emergency trail shelter. It is a 10-by-12-foot structure furnished with built-in bunks, heating and cooking stoves and a gas lantern. Located about mid way between the Windy Gap cabin and the Colorado Creek cabin (about 10 miles from each), the shelter gives skiers a place to dry their clothes and gear and get a warm night's sleep en route to Windy Gap cabin.

The new cabins offer convenient stopovers for longer ski trips.

From the kiosk you see a panorama of Nome Creek Valley and the White Mountains.

The new **kiosk** is approximately 61 miles from Fairbanks near the end of U.S. Creek Road. Standing like a sentinel on a windswept knoll at the Gateway to the White Mountains, it overlooks the primitive beauty of the Nome Creek Valley and the White Mountains.

Volunteer Sylvia Moestl and Eric Yaeger work on the Windy Creek cabin under the watchful eye of BLM carpenter Bill Baker.

Randy Goodwin and Joyce Kelso install the photo display in the Kiosk at the Gateway to the White Mountains.

The kiosk offers a nice spot to take a break after the drive from Fairbanks. Visitors can enjoy the view and read the large photo display that explains resource information about the White Mountains National Recreation Area and outlines what BLM is proposing to do in the recreation area in the future.

Skiers on the White Mountains trails usually carry their gear by dog team or snowmachine. The Wolf Run shelter offers a place to dry out and warm up overnight.

Winter, when the ground is frozen and covered with snow, is the best time to travel in the White Mountains National Recreation Area. Established routes traverse parts of the one-million-acre recreation area, and cabins have been strategically placed for stopovers.

Cabins and the Wolf Run shelter may be reserved through the Bureau of Land Management Public Room, 1150 University Ave., Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844; telephone (907) 474-3844. The fee is $15 per cabin per night. Cabins may be booked one month in advance of use. Call 474-2372 for a recording of winter trail information.

The four cabins that were available last winter were reserved a total of 171 nights. Borealis-LeFevre has been the most popular, usually a month in advance, according to Sandy King in BLM's Land Information Office in Fairbanks.

—SDW

frontier flashes

BLM has refurbished the Salmon Lake campground, 40 miles north of Nome on Kougarok Road. This campground has been heavily used by tourists and Nome residents since it was built in 1968. BLM put in new gravel pads, picnic tables, and outhouses.

The **Utility Corridor Resource Management Plan** is now being printed, and is scheduled for release to the public in mid-November. This plan covers land and resources in the Utility Corridor bordering the Dalton Highway and in the Venetie Block. It also includes federal lands within the Central Arctic Management Area and several other small tracts of land adjacent to the corridor south of 68 degrees north latitude.

A joint meeting of BLM's **Northern and Southern Alaska Advisory Councils** is scheduled for October 16 and 17 in Anchorage at the Clarion Hotel.

▽

BLM and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources will give a joint workshop at the **Alaska Miners' Association convention** in Anchorage October 31 and November 1. Topics will include how to read land status records; complying with FLPMA mining claim requirements; surface management requirements; mineral survey and mineral patent requirements; mineral patent examinations; and how to access,and use, the Alaska Resource Library. Classes willbe held in the Anchorage Federal Building, rooms 135 and 137. For more information, call Ritchie Hoyt, 271-4407.

▽

The BLM and the state of Alaska Department of Fish and Game have signed a **management plan** for **Beaver Creek National Wild and Scenic River** and all lakes and tributary streams in the White Mountains National Recreation Area. They agreed to promote a **quality fishing experience** in Beaver Creek and to maintain or improve fish habitat.

▽

In September the **American Fisheries Society** hosted Anchorage's largest conference. More than 1,000 members attended, viewed a display BLM presented of fisheries programs and a computer display of the automation of BLM's hydrology program and anadromous fish streams.

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